

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-27 remain pending in the application, Claim 1 having been amended to more clearly distinguish the recited subject matter from the cited art, Claims 10 and 11 having been amended to recite “medium” as opposed to “media,” and Claim 12 having been amended to correct a grammatical error to change “...software query...” to “...plain language query,” thus correcting an antecedent basis issue with “...software query.”

Claims Rejected Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-27 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being unpatentable by “Slennox’s eggdrop page”; April 11, 2001 (hereinafter referred to as “Slennox”). Applicants respectfully disagree with this rejection for the reasons below.

In the interest of reducing the complexity of the issues for the Examiner to consider in this response, the following discussion focuses on independent Claims 1, 12, 21, 26, and 27. The patentability of each dependent claim is not necessarily separately addressed in detail. However, applicants' decision not to discuss the differences between the cited art and each dependent claim should not be considered as an admission that applicants concur with the Examiner's conclusion that these dependent claims are not patentable over the cited references. Similarly, applicants' decision not to discuss differences between the prior art and every claim element, or every comment made by the Examiner, should not be considered as an admission that applicants concur with the Examiner's interpretation and assertions regarding those claims. Indeed, applicants believe that all of the dependent claims patentably distinguish over the references cited. However, a specific traverse of the rejection of each dependent claim is not required, since dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims from which the dependent claims ultimately depend.

Patentability of Independent Claim 1

Significant differences exist between the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language message which is then transmitted to the software resource (as recited in steps (c) and (d)).

It may be helpful to illustrate an exemplary application of applicants' claimed subject matter. As an example of the recitation in step (c), as shown in FIGURE 3, a user such as John, is enabled to enter a plain language message (i.e. message 158) such as "HOW MANY EMPLOYEES IN MY

1 DIVISION ARE ENROLLED IN A HEALTH PLAN" within an online chat session user interface
2 (e.g., in a message window 160 of an instant message dialogue box 140, as indicated in applicants'
3 specification, page 12, lines 12-14). Then, as an example of the recitation in step (d), the plain
4 language message is transmitted to the software resource (e.g., John selects a send button 164 or
5 simply depresses the return key on the keyboard, as indicated in applicants' specification, page 12,
6 lines 14-16).

7 In contrast, Slennox does not teach a plain language message, but instead teaches commands.
8 The Examiner asserts that Slennox discloses the recited elements in applicants' step (c) and in support of
9 his assertion, he cites the commands supplied to the bot. Specifically, Slennox discloses "You type in
10 Eggdrop commands by preceding them with a period (e.g. .help, .bots, .whom, .+chan, etc.)" (Slennox,
11 "Using Your Eggdrop, page 1 of 7.) However, these commands entered in Slennox are not equivalent to
12 a plain text message, such as "HOW MANY EMPLOYEES IN MY DIVISION ARE ENROLLED IN
13 A HEALTH PLAN." Note that Slennox imposes a required format, of including a "period" before a
14 word or an abbreviated word. Thus, these commands, with their required format, are NOT text
15 messages or plain language messages but instead, are in a specific required command format. It
16 follows then that Slennox does NOT teach or suggest transmitting plain language messages, but
17 instead, Slennox teaches transferring commands specified for controlling a computer.

18 Accordingly, for the reasons discussed above, the rejection of Claim 1 should be withdrawn
19 because the cited art does NOT teach enabling a user to enter a *plain language message* and
20 transmitting it. Also, Claims 2-11 depend from independent Claim 1 and are also patentable for at
21 least the reasons discussed above. Accordingly, the rejection of dependent Claims 2-11 under
22 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) over Slennox should be withdrawn.

23 Patentability of Independent Claim 12

24 Independent Claim 12 is directed towards a method for accessing information available
25 through a software resource during a messaging service session. Significant differences exist between
26 the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach enabling the
27 user to enter a plain language query, which is then transmitted to the software resource (as recited in steps
28 (b) and (c)). The Examiner has rejected Claim 12 as unpatentable over Slennox and has applied this
29 reference to steps (b) and (c) in a manner based on reasoning similar to that applied in rejecting Claim 1.
30 Although steps (b) and (c) recite "a plain language *query*" as opposed to "a plain language *message*" as

1 recited in Claim 1, applicants' above example still applies. As in the example, a user message is not
2 only produced in plain text but is also produced in the form of a query, or question because in this
3 example, John, the user, is asking how many employees in his division are enrolled in a health plan.
4 Thus, for the same reasons presented above in traversing the rejection of independent Claim 1,
5 independent Claim 12 also distinguishes over the cited art, because the cited art does NOT teach enabling
6 the user to enter a plain language query, which is then transmitted to the software resource, because plain
7 language queries, like plain language messages, are not equivalent to formatted commands that provide a
8 control input to a computer.

9 Accordingly, for the reasons discussed, the rejection of Claim 12 should be withdrawn
10 because the cited art does NOT teach transmitting plain language queries and subsequently
11 transmitting them. Also, Claims 13-20 depend from independent Claim 12 and are also patentable
12 for at least the reasons discussed above. Accordingly, the rejection of dependent Claims 13-20 under
13 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) over Slennox should be withdrawn.

14 Patentability of Independent Claim 21

15 Independent Claim 21 is directed towards a system for enabling a software resource to
16 respond as a conventional participant in a messaging service session implemented over a network.
17 Significant differences exist between the subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because
18 Slennox does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain language query for information to be obtained
19 from the software resource as recited in subparagraph (b)(iii). The Examiner has rejected Claim 21 as
20 unpatentable over Slennox and has applied this reference to subparagraph (b)(iii) in a manner based on
21 reasoning similar to that applied in rejecting Claim 1. Although subparagraph (b)(iii) recites "a plain
22 language *query*" as opposed to "a plain language *message*" as recited in Claim 1, applicants' example
23 pertaining to the user John still applies, because in the example, John's message is not only produced
24 in plain text, but is also produced in the form of a query, or question. In the example given above,
25 John is inquiring how many employees in his division are enrolled in a health plan. Thus, for the
26 same reasons presented above in traversing the rejection of independent Claim 1, independent Claim 21
27 also distinguishes over the cited art; the cited art does NOT teach enabling the user to enter a plain
28 language query. Plain language queries (and plain language messages) are not equivalent to formatted
29 commands that control computers based upon use of a predefined form or syntax.

1 Accordingly, for the reasons discussed, the rejection of Claim 21 should be withdrawn. Also,
2 Claims 22-25 depend from independent Claim 21 and are also patentable for at least the reasons
3 discussed above. Accordingly, the rejection of dependent Claims 22-25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a)
4 over Slennox should be withdrawn.

5 Patentability of Independent Claim 26

6 Independent Claim 26 is directed towards an apparatus that enables a user to interact with a
7 software resource during a messaging service session. Significant differences exist between the subject
8 matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach enabling the user to enter
9 a plain language query with the user input device, as recited in subparagraph (e)(iii). The Examiner has
10 rejected Claim 26 as unpatentable over Slennox and has applied this reference to subparagraph (e)(iii) in a
11 manner based on reasoning similar to that applied in rejecting Claim 1. Although subparagraph (e)(iii)
12 recites “a plain language *query*” and not “a plain language *message*,” as recited in Claim 1, applicants’
13 example pertaining to the user John still applies.

14 Thus, for the same reasons presented above in traversing the rejection of independent Claim 1,
15 independent Claim 26 also distinguishes over the cited art, because the cited art does NOT teach enabling
16 the user to enter a plain language query with the user input device, because plain language queries, like
17 plain language messages, are not equivalent to formatted machine commands. Accordingly, the
18 rejection of Claim 26 should be withdrawn.

19 Patentability of Independent Claim 27

20 Independent Claim 27 is directed towards an apparatus that enables a software resource to
21 interact as a participant during a messaging service session. Significant differences exist between the
22 subject matter claimed by applicants and the cited art, because Slennox does NOT teach parsing a plain
23 language query received from a user during a messaging service session, as recited in
24 subparagraph (c)(ii). The Examiner has rejected Claim 27 as unpatentable over Slennox and has applied
25 this reference to subparagraph (c)(ii) and cited the command reference and format of Slennox. However,
26 as described above in the traversal of the Examiner’s rejection of Claim 1, the **formatted commands** of
27 Slennox are not equivalent to a plain text query, such as “HOW MANY EMPLOYEES IN MY
28 DIVISION ARE ENROLLED IN A HEALTH PLAN.” This exemplary query includes basic text
29 terms and is not in a required format as taught by the cited art for the Slennox commands.

Thus, independent Claim 27 also distinguishes over the cited art, because the cited art does NOT teach parsing the plain language query received from a user during a messaging service session. Accordingly, the rejection of Claim 27 should be withdrawn.

In view of the Remarks set forth above, it will be apparent that the claims remaining in this application define a novel and non-obvious invention, and that the application is in condition for allowance and should be passed to issue without further delay. Should any further questions remain, the Examiner is invited to telephone applicants' attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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